



Public Safety Communications Highlights

- Crews were re-deployed on the Eastern Microwave Installation Build-Out project and made progress on inside work at the Antelope Butte, Culbertson, Fox Creek and Richland County Law & Justice Center sites. An accelerated project schedule has been adopted to meet grant deadlines.
- NEPA work is beginning on three Northern Tier communications sites as well as Border Patrol border crossings in preparation for Border Interoperability Demonstration Project (BIDP) grant-funded equipment installation.
- The Dillon National Guard is now connected and operating on the new digital microwave Southwest ring.

Statewide Interoperability Governing Board (SIGB) Meeting Report

Montana's Statewide Interoperability Governing Board (SIGB) held its third meeting on Tues., Jan. 10, 2012 in Helena. The board meeting began with a report from Jessica Davies, Disaster and Emergency Services (DES) Grant Specialist, on the status of various grants, including the FY10 DHS grant for replacement narrowband repeaters and base stations. Sub-recipients will be identified and the application process will be started soon. Sub-recipients will have the month of Feb. to complete both the grant and Environmental and Historic Preservation (EHP) applications, at which time the State Administrative Agency (SAA) will begin a review/recommendation process. In April, those recommendations will be brought to the SIGB for final approval, and conditional award letters will be issued. Jessica also reported that FY09 DHS funds will close in June. FY07 DHS funding to Richland and Broadwater counties already has been closed.

Carl Hotvedt, State Information Technology Services Division (SITSD), gave an update on the state's assessment of Goal #2 of the National Emergency Communications Plan, which is to have 75% of non-urban jurisdictions able to demonstrate

response-level emergency communications within one hour for routine events involving multiple jurisdictions and agencies by the end of 2011. The assessment is a two-part process and includes capabilities and performance. Counties have been asked to respond to a survey. Results will help clarify statewide needs.

Roger Smith, Lewis and Clark County, gave a technical report on the microwave system, explaining that system connectivity is working well. He also reported that microwave installation crews resumed work on the Eastern Microwave Installation Build-Out. The completion deadline for this grant project is April 30. He also brought the group up to date on a number of troubleshooting activities and recent initiatives related to the Border Interoperability Demonstration Project (BIDP) grant.



Microwave (MW) equipment installation resumed on the Eastern MW Build-Out Project last week. Shown here is a dish being installed on the newly constructed Antelope Peak Communications Site tower in Richland County. (Photo by Tom Dunne)

Tom Butler, Montana Highway Patrol, has agreed to chair the SIGB Technical Working Group. Membership will be finalized and a meeting will be scheduled to discuss a recommended spare parts and equipment inventory list to support ongoing operations and maintenance of the system.

Warren Dupuis, the Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC), reported on the recently published 2012 SAFECOM Guidance on Emergency Communications Grants, which outlines funding

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priorities. This information is available by clicking [here](#). Warren also announced that he, as the SWIC, is scheduled to give a presentation to the Education and Local Government Interim Committee on Jan. 23 at 11:00 am in Room 102 of the Capitol. In addition, board members were provided with an update on the recommendation to form a Legislative Working Group to draft legislation to:

- To codify the role, responsibility and authority of the SIGB.
- To secure funding for long-term operation and maintenance of the system.
- To secure funding for planning and match requirements to build out the system.

The board approved a motion to adopt a working group and authorized the SWIC to contact various stakeholder groups to solicit their recommendations for individuals to participate in the Legislative Working Group.

Bill Fleiner, Broadwater County DES, gave a report on the Northern Alliance Exercises that were conducted in 2011, highlighting after-action reports and improvement plans. Details may be viewed at http://itsd.mt.gov/policy/councils/sigb/01102012_meeting.mcp.x.

The next SIGB meeting is set for Tues., Feb. 7 at the State Capitol beginning at 10:00 am. Agenda items should be provided to [Warren Dupuis](#) or [Dick Clark](#) via email.

Public Safety Resumes Push for D Block with Congress' Return

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Public safety resumed its push for the 700 MHz D block spectrum in anticipation of Congress' return from its holiday recess, and the appointed conferees begin negotiations ahead of the Feb. 29 mandate for enacting a year-long payroll tax-reduction extension bill.

The D block and other spectrum provisions were included in a year-end tax bill passed by the House, but they were stripped from a later version agreed upon by both chambers of Congress that extended the tax payroll bill for just two months. A longer-term bill is planned to be negotiated when Congress returns to Washington. The House is back in session Jan. 17, and the Senate reconvenes Jan. 23.

Ahead of the return of Congress, the Public Safety Alliance (PSA) reiterated its support for finally realizing a nationwide interoperable public-safety broadband network. The PSA sent an open letter on spectrum legislation this week to all members of Congress and released a briefing document entitled, [Building a Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network](#),

which outlines the need for gaining D Block without the threat of losing current 700 MHz narrowband spectrum.

Communications Unit Leader Training Successful

According to Mike Stapp, Disaster and Emergency Services (DES) Planner, the Communications Unit Leader (COML) training session conducted Jan. 9-12 at Fort Harrison was a great success.

Several different organizations participated, including the Civil Support Team (CST), DES, the Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), Emergency Communications for North Central Montana ARES (Amateur Radio Emergency Services), firefighters and Jefferson County DES.

The course taught an All-Hazards approach to how to coordinate on-scene emergency communications during a multi-jurisdictional response to an event. It was coordinated through DES and the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC). Many thanks go to Dan Hawkins, OEC Region VIII Coordinator, for his support of this training.

Upcoming Meetings

• Tues., Jan. 24: State Agency Radio Users Task Force

Helena • 3:00 - 4:30 pm
Mitchell Building, 125 N. Roberts, Rm. 160

• Thurs., Feb. 2: Advanced Crisis Communications for Public Safety Communications Supervisors, 911 Dispatchers & Emergency Management Personnel

Billings • 8:00 am - 5:30 pm
Crowne Plaza, 27 N 27th St.
Register by Jan. 20; Cost: \$125
Contact: joann@aeht.org or 406-248-4893.

• Mon. - Thurs., Feb. 13-17: Communications Technician (COMT) Training [Link to Course Description](#)

Fort Harrison • 8:00 am - 5:00 pm daily
Armed Forces Reserve Center
Regional Training Institute (RTI) Rm. 12; Contact: Michael Stapp, Planner, DES; mstapp@mt.gov or 406-324-4786

• Thurs. - Fri., March 15 and 16: Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) Training

Billings • 8:00 am - 5:00 pm daily
Fire Station #1, 2300 9th Ave. North
Note: These are two one-day sessions. March 15 is an overview on Exercise Design and the HSEEP Toolkit.
March 16 focuses on Exercise Design with a practicum.
Contact: Lindsey Shafer, HSEEP Coordinator, DES; lshafer@mt.gov or 406-324-4780